THE HARA-KIRI.

By H. WORTHINGTON PAGE, M. D.

PART I.

Colonel Davidson was dying. The old traveler who bore the scars of many thrilling adventures, whose iron constitution had stood by him during his years of travel in far-off climes—was at last called upon to meet the inevitable. As the gray head rolled restlessly to and fro on the white pillow, the doctor and Mr. Warner, the colonel's old lawyer andl ife-long friend, stood sadly by and ministered to the wants of the sufferer, until, as the first faint glimmer of dawn came through the open window, the soul of the invalid took its flight.

Colonel Davidson was a bachelor. During his many years of travel he had picked up here and there odd curios, until his big, rambling house was filled with an interesting collection that was a never-failing source of entertainment to his friends. Less than an hour before the colonel died he opened his eyes and turning toward the old lawyer, said with difficulty: "Warner, after I'm gone I want you to see that the doctor gets that sword of mine." He raised his hand and pointed to an odd-looking weapon that hung over the mantel. "It's a Japanese affair," he continued, feebly, "and I've always prized it because of its interesting history. You'll find the story of it among my papers, and don't fail to give that to the doctor with the sword."

About a week after the colonel's funeral the doctor received the sword. It was securely wrapped, and with it was this note from Mr. Warner:

"My Dear Doctor: I send you the sword. The history does not accompany it because I have not yet found it among the colonel's papers. It will doubtless come to light soon and I will mail it to you at once. Sincerely yours,

"Charles Alfred Warner."

The doctor undid the wrappings and examined the weapon curiously, for, although he had often noticed it hanging over the mantel of the colonel's bedroom, he had never before had opportunity to examine it closely. He noticed as he unrolled it from the paper that it had a musty odor, pleasantly suggestive of antiquity and strange adventure.

It was an odd-looking old weapon about thirty inches long. The scabbard was plain, of wood covered with thick, black hide, and heavily tipped with brass. The hilt was a circular piece of brass covered with Japanese letters and designs. On one side of the scabbard was a filiat projection which the doctor found to be the handle of a narrow-bladed hara-kiri knife that fitted snugly into a sheath made in the side of the scabbard. The blade of this knife was eight inches long, and so much narrowed by repeated sharpenings that some characters engraved on the blade had been partly ground away. Slipping the hara-kiri knife again into its socket, the doctor drew the sword from the scabbard.

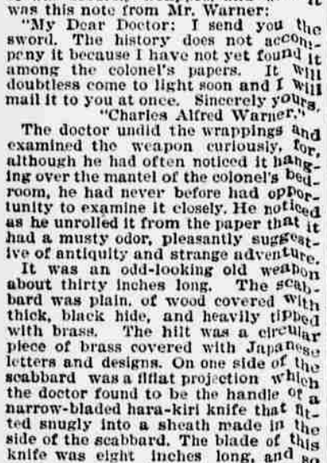
It was an ugly-looking blade about two feet long, perfectly plain, heavy and thick, with its edge ground down to the sharpness of a razor. The handle was of metal, closely inlaid with minute bits of colored sea shell and ingeniously wound with braided black silk, in an open work design showing the inlaid handle beneath.

Set firmly into each side of the handle was a small metal plate. One had letters engraven on it, the original owner's name, the doctor thought. The engraving on the other side was of such peculiar design as to excite the doctor's curiosity. In the center were wavering flames of fire from the midst of which rose the ugly heads of five serpents their fangs protruding from their mouths. This scene had the rising sun for its background.

"That's a suggestive design," thought the doctor; "certainly must have been very comfronting. I supose it's the owner's coat-of-arms. He must have been a regular old tippler to have chosen snakes for his crest. Perhaps he inherited them from a drunken grandfather. I wish Mr. Warner would hurry up with the pedigree. Meantime I'm going to get some of this engraving translated if I can."

"Bridget," he said, as that worthy came in just then to fill the office lamp; "do you know any Japanese man?"

"Hiven sakes, no!" ejaculated Bridget, nearly dropping the lamp in her astonishment at the question. "Japinase mon indade!" she sniffed, "an phwat wud I be wantin' of a Janinese mon? Shure an haven't I enough to do wid looking afther the hathen o' my own country widout huntin' up celischils?"



"IT'S A JAPANESE AFFAIR," HE CONTINUED, FEEBLY.

"I know you have," replied the doctor, laughing. "It's not for you but myself I wanted him. I thought you might know where I could find one."

"Indade Oi do not," said Bridget, somewhat mollified, "or Japinase wimin nather, unless it be Timmie would do ye."

"Just the man!" exclaimed the doctor. "I wonder I did not think of him before. Say, Bridget, when you have filled the lamp, will you go around the corner and ask Mr. Roberts if he will let Timme come to my office for a few minutes?"

"Yis, sir Oi will," said Bridget, as she went out muttering to herself. "A Japinase mon, indade! Why, if Oi had wan of thim Oid—" and words failing to rise to the possibilities of the occasion, she kicked a hassock that happened to be in her path so viciously that it rolled under the piano.

The doctor busied himself with writting for twenty minutes or so, when there came a soft knock at the door and in response to his "come in" the Japanese entered. Tim, or "Timmie," as he was commonly known in the neighborhood, had been a waiter in the restaurant on the avenue for some years. He had usually served the doctor when he took his meals there during his family's absence in the summer. He was a small though muscular man, about fifty years of age and with pronounced Japanese features. He was prompt and obliging, but never could be drawn into conversation, and with all his good qualities there was something about the man, or in his face, which made the doctor instinctively distrust him.

"Well, Timme, I've a Japanese sword here," said the doctor, taking it down from the top of his desk; "there's some writing on it which I can't make out, being a little rusty in my Japanese since I left school, so I sent for you to see if you can translate it for me."

Timmie, with a grin, laid down his hat and took the sword in his hands.

"Yes, it's Japan sword, sure 'nough; very good one, too. Belonged to a big man, officer, I guess," said Timme, in his peculiar cracked-pot voice, examing the weapon curiously.

"What do those letters and design on the handle mean?" asked the doctor.

The Japanese shifted his hands which had hitherto covered the inscription on the handle and, stepping over to the window, looked at the characters closely in the strong light.

He started visibly as he did so, and became greatly agitated. Muttering a string of unintelligible Japanese, he turned suddenly toward the doctor

THE HARA-KIRI HAD BEEN COMMITTED.

with which to defend himself, so he grasped a chair, a small, heavy one of His little eyes, usually so expressionless, were now widely dilated and snapped viciously; the smile had died away and in its place was a look of cruel determination about the thin, compressed lips; his yellow face was livid with a look of rage and hate. The doctor had barely time, in his astonishment, to note the startling transformation in the usually inoffensive waiter, when the latter suddenly sprang from the window, and drawing the sword from its scabbard, advanced threateningly upon the doctor.

"What do you mean? Put down that sword," exclaimed the doctor, thinking the man had gone insane, and now thoroughly alarmed.

"I mean what I say; I must take your life; there's no help for you," he cried, still advancing upon the doctor, and now the picture of murderous fury.

There was no time to call for assistance. In fact, it was done so quickly that it never occurred to the doctor to do so. Convinced that the Japanese intendedto take his life, he sprang from his chair and around to the other side of his desk, placing it between himself and the would-be assassin. There was no weapon within reach mahogany, sent him from the West Indies by a patient. Lifting it, he prepared to sell his life dearly, just as the maddened man, with an exclamation in Japanese rushed upon him. Seizing the handle of the sword in both hands, and swinging it around above his head, he brought it down with murderous strength. The doctor raised his chair just in the neck of time to catch the full force of the blow. To that solid oak chair the doctor today owes his life. The keen blade cut through two of its rounds, but the heavy seat met the blow with such force as to send the sword flying from the murderous grasp,and, springing across the floor, it flew under the big sofa standing against the wall.

The Japanese looked dazed for an instant at being thus foiled, but only for an instant, for he quickly turned and ran to where he had thrown the scabbard on the floor near the window. Picking it up, he drew forth the hara-kiri knife and again turned toward the doctor. This momentary respite was not lost to the latter. He had reached over the corner of his desk and, pulling open a drawer, drew forth his big revolver, which he always kept there, but had never before had occasion to use. It was a modern weapon, fully loaded and carried a ball of thirty-eight-calibre. As the now thoroughly frenzied man again rushed at the doctor he found himself facing the revolver.

Contrary to the doctor's expectations, however, this did not deter him in the least from his murderous purpose. As he sprang forward for the second time with the keen-bladed hara-kiri knife raised in the air to strike, the doctor fired. The shot took effect. The villain's right arm dropped to his side broken by the ball, and the knife fell from his powerless grasp to the floor. With a yell of pain and defiance, the Japanese sprang to where the knife had fallen, picked it up in his left hand, raised it high in the air and turning his livid face upward uttered several words in his own language. Then, before the doctor could divine his intention, he plunged the knife into his own abdomen and again—and again, pulling and tearing at the handle each time—and lastly with a dying yell drove it into his breast and fell to the floor dead.

The hara-kiri had been committed.

PART II.

The doctor was glad to see Mr. Warner, when the latter called a few nights after Timme's tragic ending. "Glad to see you again," said the old gentleman as he cordially shook the doctor's hand. "Well! I see by the papers you have had quite an experience."

"Indeed I have," said the doctor. "I hardly know what to expect next, nowadays, when a man comes into my office."

"Rather an unpleasant feeling, I should judge."

"Decidedly. The affair gave my office so much notoriety that I fear it may rival Central park as a suicidery. I like to be accommodating, but I really wish Timme had selected some other place in which to make away with himself."

Mr. Warner laughed. "Don't worry about me, doctor. I've no thought of attacking you, much less of killing myself."

"Thank you. I feel relieved. I was going to say that if you had I'd like the chance to take up some of my rugs, just to save the wear and tear, as it were."

"So it really all happened in connection with the old sword, did it?" said Mr. Warner, nodding toward the weapon which hung on the wall.

"Yes. The Japanese no sooner began to scrutinize the characters on the handle than he went insane, and after nearly killing me with the thing, finished by killing himself."

"Humph! romantic. Well, I've found the history,and after your dramatic experience the sword is doubly interesting to me. I must admit my curiosity is wrought up to a high pitch, so instead of sending it to you, I brought it myself, hoping you will give me a chance to hear it."

"Certainly," replied the doctor. "Light one of those cigars and make yourself comfortable, and we'll look it over together."

The doctor took the well-filled legal envelope which Mr. Warner extracted from his inside coat pocket. On the outside was inscribed in Col. Davidson's bold handwriting: "History of My Japanese Sword." Taking a pair of scissors from his desk the doctor carefully cut the end from the envelope and drew forth a bulky manuscript, also in the colonel's familiar hand. Seating himself by the desk, he spread it open and read aloud the following account:

"This sword came into my possession while residing in Tokio during the winter of 1869. I formerly belonged to an official of rank under the Tycoon, named Ti Yama. By an ancient law no one but a man of the nobility is permitted to carry the sword in Japan. Ti Yama was a craftly old man who, though a favorite with the Tycoon, was so cruel that he was much hated by the people. In those days, when a head dropped into the basket every time the high officials winked, cruelty in one in Ti Yama's influential position was often a good cause for hatred. Japan was at that time under a sort of feudal system, and was infested by organized bands of robbers, similar to the Italian banditti, who committed all kinds of outrages to persons and property.

"By accident it was discovered that Ti Yama was in secret the chieftan of one of these bands of marauders, and he was condemned to death, together with six of his followers who were seized with him. In Japan, when a man of rank was condemned to die, he might choose one of two options. Either to be killed by the public headsman, in which case his family were forever disgraced and his property confiscated by the government, or if he possessed the courage he might commit hara-kiri.

"This latter was an ancient custom, introduced into Japan during the Ashikaga dynasty, 1336 to 1568. The term comes from hara, a stomach, and kiri, to cut. It consisted in self-disembowelment with the hara-kiri knife, a keen, narrow blade, fitting into its separate little sheath made in the scabbard of every sword. Hara-kiri was only applied to the suicidal act, and was regarded as an honorable expiation for the crime committed. The ordinary culprit, of the common people, had no choice as to the manner of his removal from the earth. Decapitation followed as a matter of course. Under the reign of the present enlightened emperor these barbarous methods and customs have been abolished. Executions in Japan are strictly private, but through the influence of an officiol of rank I was smuggled into a upper room of the palace, and there, from behind the shutter of a window overlooking the court, I secretly witnessed the death of Ti Yama and his associates. When the hour came, the old robber chieftain with his head erect strode with dignified composure to the center of the court set aside for the execution of criminals, followed by his trembling fellow-prisoners. When asked by whose hand he would die he made no answer, but calmly unfastened the belt that held his sword and, laying it upon the ground, drew from its sheath in the scabbard the hara-kiri knife. Standing erect with a look of defiance on his face he plunged the blade deep into his abdomen and fell with an expiring groan to the ground.

"The other six culprits who were to die had no choice. With their hands bound behind their backs they knelt on the ground, their heads bent forward and necks bared, while the headsman, a big, muscular Japanese, picked up Ti Yama's own sword and dispatched them one after another. It is remarkable what skill a Japanese headsman attains in his grewsome work. So accurate is he that the head is completely severed from the trunk in one blow. To fail in this so that a second stroke would be necessary would result in the loss of his position and possibly his own life.

"The slaughter effectually broke up that band of robbers. Those who escaped detection and capture fled from the country. Among them was Ti Yama's own son, who bore his father's name and was supposed to have embarked in a vessel bound for America. One of the condemned men confessed just before his death that the band had adopted a peculiar device—the heads of five serpents rising from flames of fire in the face of the rising sun—as its secret emblem. Each member of the mystic circle had sworn upon old Ti Yama's sword to kill at once anyone upon whose person or property that symbol

CAREFULLY CUT THE END FROM THE ENVELOPE.

might be found. Failing to succeed in this, the one attempting it was to immediately commit hara-kiri. It was by marking this device upon the house or property that the intended victims were indicated. According to custom, old Ti Yama's sword fell into the hands of the headsman in lieu of a fee, and from him I purchased it shortly after the execution, for an exorbitant price.

"A Japanese never forgets or fails to keep an oath once taken,and as a number of Ti Yama's bandit followers escaped, and doubtless some of them are in America, I have thought it wise never to show this sword to a Japanese,fearing that should I by any chance happen to show it to one of these desperate men the possession of that fatal symbol engraven on its handle might result in dangerous bodily violence to myself.

"Signed, Edward Davidson."

"Well, who would think that innocetn piece of bric-a-brac could have such a thrilling history," said Mr.Warner, as the doctor finished reading the narrative.

"That's true," said the doctor; "it is remarkable. If I had been less impatient and waited until I knew the history before showing it to that Jap, it would have saved me considerable trouble."

"Yes; we cannot always know what is best for us. I'm very glad, though, to have heard the tale," replied Mr. Warner.

"So am I," replied the doctor, thoughtfully. "However, there's one point lacking to make the tragic romance complete."

"What is that?"

"To find out who this unfortunate Timme really was."

"Yes; but how can you do that?" asked Mr. Warner.

"I fear not at all. Wait! I have one possible hope."

The doctor stepped to his telephone and rang the bell while Mr. Warner waited curiously.

"Hello!"

"Hello! Give me the Fifteenth Precinct Station House, 296 Boulevard, I think, is the number."

After a moment's delay he continued: "Hello! Is that you, Capt. Peck? I'm Dr. J. L. Smith. I wanted to ask about that Japanese waiter who committed suicide in my office last week, that would give a clew as to who he was?"

The captain's reply came back over the wire: "No, doctor, he had worked in the restaurant for several years, but the proprietor, Mr. Roberts,knew nothing about him beyond that. He had no possessions whatever but the clothes he wore. But wait—I believe there was something else. Hold the wire a minute until I look at the blotter."

The doctor repeated to Mr. Warner what the police captain had said and waited impatiently, with the receiver at his ear, for the captain to continue.

"Hello!"

"All right, what is it?" called the doctor.

"The record of the case on the blotter says that underneath the Jap's clothing was a medal suspended from his neck by a cord."

"Yes, what was on it?" asked the doctor eagerly.

"On one side was a queer design—five snakes rising out of a flaming fire. On the opposite face were some Japanese characters. The case semed a clear

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one of suicide, yet in order to investigate it thoroughly the medal was submitted to the Japanese interpreter at the criminal court building. His report said that the strange design was probably the emblem of some secret order or society to which the man belonged. The characters on the reverse side were letters, he said, which translated into English would spell "Ti Yama," which was evidently the suicide's name."

Col. Davidson's Japanese sword hangs in a conspicuous place on the wall of the doctor's office. The latter often repeats its story to his friends, yet he never takes the heavy blade into his hands that a shudder does not go through him at the thought of how nearly he came to losing his own life by its keen edge. And the slender hara-kiri knife is always unpleasantly eloquent to him of the tragic end of "Timmie," the son of old Ti Yama.

(The end.)

AMERICAN MEN SCORNED.

Yankee Woman Writes to a British Newspaper That the Masculine Briton Makes by Far the Better Husband.

Cable Letter in the Sun.

The American colony in London is a little in doubt whether to be amused or angry over the means employed by a young woman from California to gain sudden and cheap notoriety. It is only in England, perhaps, that a foreigner can hope to gain favor by denouncing his own countrymen or by flattering those whom he visits at the expense of his own kith and kin. To make a sober reply to such attacks is a good deal like opening a fire with a battery of artillery to drive away a few mosquitoes. It is not necessary to name the mosquito in this instance, for her buzzing has not been heard since the broadside which her annoyance provoked has been fired.

The Daily Chronicle, a newspaper whose recently developed affection for America is open to suspicion, printed very prominently a few days ago an article discussing the mental, moral, and spiritual qualities of the average American man as compared with those of an average Englishman. The writer, who subscribed herself "An American Woman," did not hesitate to declare her countrymen inferior to their English cousins in all respects. In fact, she described her countrymen as contemptible creatures, unfit for the society of women, and indeed hopeless from a social point of view. Here are a few of her most delightful sentences:

"No two races on this earth are so dissimilar as those of the United States and Great Britain." An Englishman is "a superior being, of active brain, much travel, experience with women and a certain desire to please." "American men are an eccentric growth, a hodgepodge flung together in a galloping money-grabbing civilization, not fully known to themselves." "I have known some fifty American men more or less intimately, and I never had so much as a passing acquaintance with one whose soul had passed the embryonic state." "In America we all like and admire our fathers and brothers, but we haven't any great admiration for our husband, although we may be rather fond of them in a patronizing way."

A REPLY.

The first suspicion which arose in the minds of most American readers of this diatribe was that the editor of the Chronicle had played a dastardly trick upon his contributor by substituting "English" for "American" and "American" for "English" throughout the article. Then it was imagined that the queer screed must conceal some joke or be intended as a veiled sarcasm directed against certain well-known English foibles. Nobody thought of being irritated or of taking the thing seriously until it began to be seen that the ineffable and incomparable English conceit was solemnly accepting this fresh testimonial to the superiority of England and all things English. It was this exasperating fact, no doubt, which induced Helen Densmore to undertake the task of making a sober reply to this really harmless traducer of American manhood. As Miss Densmore is really well qualified to contrast the men and the society of the two countries, it is interesting to read a few of her frank comments as the result of her observations. For instance, she says:

"In England, I have been amazed to observe, my lord, the husband, is a creature apart; that the wife vies with the servants in seeing to it that 'the master' is first and always considered; that the tit-bits, the comfortable chair, and the warm corner are reserved for him. I am not blaming him; we are all more or less creatures of environment; and 'the master' has occupied his position so long that he takes his place quite as a matter of course. And as long as English women are content with this arrangement it is probably better for them. But when it is put forward that the average American woman is under the glamour of, and is full of admiration for, the foreign husband, I must demur. Enough of them have floated across the Atlantic that his peculiarities, in contrast with the American husband, are quite well known; and so far as my acquaintance goes the average American wife counts it among her blessings that she has escaped the domination, and consequent degradation. And, according to my observation, many English wives are in much the same frame of mind as their American sisters, so far as preferring equality and comradeship to the airs and condescensions of 'the master.' I first came to London, over twenty years since, on a mission from the government at Washington, and carried such letters of introduction as brought me in contact with a large number of ladies and gentlemen of social importance. I was struck with the very great interest manifested by English women in the greater freedom of American wives; and it would seem to me that the normal woman, when made acquainted with the facts of the two situations, who does not share such interest must come under Carlyle's classification.

NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTES.

"I confess to feeling not a little discouraged when I read the following quotation from your contributor: 'Woman has two instincts which go further toward forming her character than all others—the instinct of submission and the instinct of having her own way. The chances of the former are synonymous with the chances of happiness—even a baby ruled with an iron hand is a happy baby. But give the baby or the woman its head, and there is no limit to desires and no possibility of fulfillment.' I had supposed that in our days about every one had come to recognize that freedom is better than slavery. A considerable agitation has been going on for the past quarter of a century, making the public aware of the enormities of the tight waist. I was amazed not long since to see one of London's medical journals soberly undertaking to make out that the compressed waist is a most desirable achievement and the corset a great boon! To read on July 18, 1896, in large type, 'By an American Woman,' that there is yet an intelligent woman who hugs the chains that bind her, gives me a similar start. Of course it is true that when the body has been long enough misplaced and disturbed, the corset seems like a necessity; and, correspondingly, when a woman's mind has been similarly compressed and distorted, that she can prefer slavery to freedom, the 'master' to a comrade and companion, and the English husband to the American."

Perhaps, however, the best answer to the "American Woman," who apparently is ardently desirous of securing an English husband, is to be found in the Chronicle's divorce court reports of the curernt week. The story of the titled husband who slapped his wife's face upon the wedding journey because she had not brought with her enough money from her private fortune, and several other records of the peculiar privileges sometimes insisted upon by English husbands, all help to make ridiculous the poor creature from California, whose patriotism has disappeared as completely as her common sense.

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Stelle, J. Lawrence, 308 Spruce.

PHOTOGRAPHER.
H. S. Cramer, 311 Lackawanna ave.

PLUMBING AND HEATING.
Howley, P. F. & M. F., 231 Wyoming ave.

REAL ESTATE.
Horatio N. Patrick, 326 Washington.

RUBBER STAMPS, STENCILS, ETC.
Scranton Rubber Stamp Co., 538 Spruce street.

ROOFING.
National Roofing Co., 331 Washington.

SANITARY PLUMBING
W. A. Wiedebusch, 234 Washington ave.

STEAMSHIP TICKETS.
J. A. Barron, 215 Lackawanna and Priceburg.

STEREO-RELIEF DECORATIONS AND PAINTING.
S. H. Morris, 247 Wyoming ave.

TEA, COFFEE AND SPICE.
Grand Union Tea Co., 103 S. Main.

TRUSSES, BATTERIES, RUBBER GOODS
Benjamin & Benjamin, Franklin and Spruce.

UNDERTAKER AND LIVERY.
Raub, A. R., 425 Spruce.

UPHOLSTERER AND CARPET LAYER.
C. H. Hazlett, 226 Spruce street.

WALL PAPER, ETC.
Ford, W. M., 120 Penn.

WATCHMAKER AND JEWELER.
Rogers, A. E., 215 Lackawanna.

WINES AND LIQUORS.
Walsh, Edward J., 32 Lackawanna.

WIRE AND WIRE ROPE.
Washburn & Moen Mfg Co., 119 Franklin ave.